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ABSTRACT

In 2001-2002, the partnership between the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and the Institute for Learning of the University of Pittsburgh continued with professional development for guiding leadership and implementing effective classroom practices throughout the school district. Under the initiative known as the Principles of Learning (POL), a third principle, Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum, was added for focus on professional development and for implementation in the classroom. Efforts to implement the principles of Clear Expectations and Accountable Talk also continued. The evaluation centered on staff involvement in professional development related to POL, the quality of classroom implementation of POL, support for the initiative, and the strengths and challenges of the partnership leading POL. Evaluation data from a variety of sources show continued implementation of practices and a common language about POL, with a high degree of participation at individual campuses. Findings did show that opportunities for professional development differed across groups of staff, with principals more likely than teachers to participate in professional development. Observational data from classrooms showed variations in the quality and degree of implementation of the POL. Of 34 classrooms observed, 47% were rated as weak in overall implementation of the POL, with 24% rated as moderate, and 15% rated as strong in implementation. In spite of the strengths of POL, participants have cited concerns about the costs involved in the partnership, and the lack of time for professional development activities. Four appendixes contain a glossary, observation protocols, and data about classroom observations. (Contains 1 figure, 5 tables, and 14 references.) (SLD)

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Principles of Learning

2001-2002 Evaluation Report

Austin Independent School District

Office of Program Evaluation

October 2002

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Principles of Learning, 2001-2002 Report

Austin Independent School District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2001-2002, the partnership between the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and the Institute for Learning (IFL) of the University of Pittsburgh continued with professional development for guiding leadership and implementing effective classroom practices throughout AISD. Under the initiative known as the Principles of Learning (POL), a third Principle, Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum was added for focus in professional development and for implementation in classrooms. Efforts to implement the Principles of Clear Expectations and Accountable Talk also continued. IFL staff led four seminars for principals, and other avenues for professional development were available to principals, teachers, and instructional specialists.

The evaluation centered on finding answers to questions about: 1) the quality of and extent of staff involvement in professional development related to POL, 2) the quality of classroom implementation of the Principles, 3) district and campus support for the initiative, and 4) the strengths and challenges involved in the AISD-IFL partnership.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation of the 2001-2002 Principles of Learning initiative yielded several positive findings:

- There was a continued implementation of practices and a common language among many educators in the district about effective leadership and classroom instruction. Principals reported that their campuses were implementing the Principles of Learning at high rates during 2001-2002, in comparison with the previous school year. Also, 85% of principals reported that they had participated in *at least* three LearningWalks at their campuses during 2001-2002.
- A large majority of principals (88%) and teachers (80%) who responded to the Spring 2002 surveys reported that POL-related professional development included discussions of the TEKS.
- The district's program leaders cited a strengthened focus by administrators on instructional practice in the classroom that in turn, has guided decision-making about other initiatives and the use of funds. Program leaders also name the consultations with IFL staff and resources brought to the district by the IFL staff as benefits.

Despite the strengths of the initiative, data from the evaluation indicated the following challenges:

- Opportunities for professional development differed across groups of staff. In estimates of total hours spent on POL-related professional development, 31% of principals reported spending 20-39 hours, but a majority responded that they had spent more time than that.

Of the teachers, 63% responded that they had participated in no more than 19 hours on professional development related to the Principles of Learning.

- Opportunities for professional development for principals and teachers varied across the district. Although this aspect of the work with the IFL was planned, the activities (e.g., conferences held by the IFL, or pilot work with NetLearn software) may have enhanced participants' understanding of the Principles of Learning and played a role in the varying levels of implementation across the district.
- Observational data from classrooms showed that variability in the quality and degree of implementation of the Principles of Learning still exists in classrooms across the district. Of 34 classrooms that were observed, 47% were rated as weak in overall implementation of the POL, 24% were rated as moderate, and 15% were rated as strong in implementation.
- Program leaders, principals, teachers, and instructional specialists cited a lack of time for professional development activities that include discussions about the Principles of Learning.
- Despite its strengths, some district program leaders have cited a concern about the costs involved in the AISD-IFL partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *District administrators and program leaders must communicate a clear message about the Principles of Learning initiative. Educators at all levels must understand that the Principles of Learning initiative is a priority and that implementation of the Principles is expected on every campus. Eliminate mixed messages and reinforce support for the initiative through an established system for professional development.*

The findings suggest that understanding about the initiative may be most concentrated at the top levels of administration. If district administrators expect the Principles of Learning to be implemented at a deeper level in classrooms, it is important that district leaders (a) communicate that student learning that incorporates the Principles of Learning and its underlying values do *not* conflict with preparation for the upcoming TAKS and (b) show district staff how these efforts are complementary. More importantly, district leaders need to ensure that the district's staff of educators, as well as new principals and teachers in the district, have opportunities to learn about the Principles of Learning and become thoroughly immersed in this culture of learning. It is crucial that new staff have sufficient opportunities to become familiar with the Principles of Learning from their perspectives and experiences as learners.

2. *Ensure that all principals make the Principles of Learning a priority and expect to see the reforms implemented at the classroom level. Make certain that principles understand the Principles of Learning, the ways in which they are incorporated into instructional practice, and the importance of fostering continuous learning for their campus staff.*

The evaluation of the POL initiative suggests that the implementation of the Principles of Learning might be more similar across the district if professional development opportunities were more consistent for principals. Principals might also benefit from more professional development that occurs in smaller groups, whether by area, campus level, or learning level (e.g., novice principals learning together, or experienced principals learning together). A majority of principals

reported that area and vertical team meetings were most effective for helping them learn about the Principles; district leaders of this initiative may want to consider how this avenue for professional development may be further utilized.

3. *Ensure that all teachers incorporate the Principles of Learning in instructional practice and that they understand the Principles and how they fit with their area(s) of teaching.*

Because teachers reportedly spent relatively small amounts of time on professional development devoted to the Principles of Learning, program leaders for the initiative should find ways to create time for professional growth and the development of communities of learners among teachers. If district administrators expect implementation of the Principles of Learning in classrooms, it is important that professional development opportunities in the form of coaching and other activities such as study groups or LearningWalks with colleagues continue and be made available for all teaching staff. Teachers reported that grade level team meetings (or departmental meetings, at the secondary level) were most effective at helping them learn about the Principles of Learning. Grade level/departmental team meetings, then, may provide one way to begin strengthening the professional development opportunities offered to teachers.

4. *Explore the possibility of having the district leaders assume more management of POL-related changes in the district.*

Although some program leaders have referred to the financial cost of the partnership with the Institute for Learning as being excessively high, the real costs to the district also involve the time needed for professional development. District leaders should consider that reforms to instructional practice and leadership in other districts with IFL partnerships have taken years to implement.. A strong implementation of the kinds of reforms advocated by the Institute for Learning and under the Principles of Learning will take several more years. If district leaders want to continue reforms under the Principles of Learning, plans for committing the necessary time and resources must be in place, whether the reforms are to be carried out with the assistance of the Institute for Learning or solely in-house.

PREFACE

The purpose of this report is to present information for decision makers about the implementation of the Principles of Learning initiative during the second year of the partnership between the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and the Institute for Learning (IFL), and to make recommendations for program improvement. Program managers for the partnership and campus administrators will find information about implementation of the Principles of Learning and about professional development related to the initiative. Central office administrators and school board members will find information that should inform decisions about district practice and policy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation staff would like to acknowledge the feedback and technical assistance provided on various portions of the evaluation of the Principles of Learning initiative during 2001-2002. AISD program managers offered input in planning the evaluation and on the surveys used to gather data from participants. Staff in the Division of Accountability and Information Systems provided support and constructive feedback for this evaluation. Resident Fellows of the IFL at the University of Pittsburgh and a senior advisor for education policy at the RAND Corporation offered feedback on the construction of surveys. AISD also acknowledges the RGK Foundation for their support of the AISD-IFL partnership. Finally, the evaluation staff would like to thank all those who participated in the surveys, interviews, observations that were conducted during the course of the evaluation, especially the teachers, instructional specialists, and principals at the campuses.

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OVERVIEW

Since July 2000, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) has maintained a partnership with the Institute for Learning (IFL), which is directed by Lauren Resnick at the University of Pittsburgh. The goal of this partnership is to provide a framework for guiding leadership and classroom practices that ensure all students in the district have the opportunity to reach the standards established by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The framework is built around instruction and student learning through the Principles of Learning, which describe research-based practices shown to promote academic rigor and high-quality learning by students. In AISD, the instructional standards on which the POL initiative is based are the TEKS. The Principles incorporate a philosophy that emphasizes effort rather than aptitude for building achievement as students work toward the learning standards. AISD program managers for the initiative have led the implementation of the Principles of Learning in a gradual way, starting with Clear Expectations and Accountable Talk in 2000-2001, and adding Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum in 2001-2002. See Appendix A for a description of these Principles of Learning.

The partnership also aims to strengthen instructional leadership within the district's entire staff of educators by generating thoughtful discussion about instruction and student learning. The IFL uses the term *Nested Learning Community* to describe the model of continuous learning among the district's staff of educators. Under this model, all staff are teachers as well as learners who engage in professional development activities such as study groups and campus visits known as LearningWalks. These activities give staff opportunities to reflect on and improve teaching practices. In this dual role of teacher and learner, all educators are expected to ensure that classrooms are structured for high-quality learning.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The activities under the AISD-IFL partnership were aimed at fostering a system that, at all levels, is focused on student learning and on improving instruction throughout the district. Consequently, the major activities in this initiative involved professional development for educators at all levels and activities that enabled educators to assess instructional practices in the classroom.

In addition to the ongoing discussions and implementation of Clear Expectations and Accountable Talk throughout the year, professional development and implementation efforts included Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum—the Principle added in 2001-

2002. Educators at all levels, including teachers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, and administrators, all participated in professional development focused on the Principles. Among other professional development activities, two district-wide staff development days for teachers devoted time to the Principles of Learning. Professional development for principals occurred most visibly in five district wide Principals' Seminars. The purpose of POL-related professional development was to continue discussions about and coaching in the Principles of Learning that will improve classroom practices. Discussion of the TEKS was an important part of the professional development. In addition, some teachers, instructional specialists, and curriculum specialists were called to participate in professional development on a new component of the AISD-IFL partnership known as Content-Focused Coaching (CFC).[1]

LearningWalks continued to occur at all campuses, though not all were led by an area superintendent as was often the case during 2000-2001. For some campuses, LearningWalks served as another means for teachers' professional development on the Principles of Learning; these were led by principals or area superintendents. LearningWalks were conducted to engage campus staff in discussions about instruction and student learning at a thoughtful level, to examine what the practices associated with the Principles looked like in the classroom, and to discuss future improvements.

FUNDING FOR THE INITIATIVE

The total allocation for funding the AISD-IFL partnership for 2001-2002 was $235,000 (i.e., $3.01 per student, based on approximately 78,000 students). Funding for the initiative came from a variety of sources. AISD contributed $110,000 from its Coca-Cola staff development fund, and the RGK Foundation provided a grant of $125,000 to the Austin Public Education Fund to help fund the cost of AISD's partnership with IFL. Additionally, a second $87,000 contract was developed for the Content-Focused Coaching component, as part of the state's Academics 2000 Cycle 8 grant funds to AISD. AISD's partnership with the IFL led to additional funding, including $60,000 from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Research and Improvement to fund the district's participation in the IFL's technology-based professional development program known as NetLearn. Another $75,000 was provided from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Foundation for AISD's participation in a think tank with other districts that have established partnerships with the IFL (Rips, 2001).

[1] Content-Focused Coaching was a professional development program funded in 2001-02 through the Academics 2000 grant to AISD (see Huskey, 2002). Seven coaches were selected for participation in the program, which served 27 campuses. CFC was designed to train instructional coaches to assist teachers in strengthening their reading instruction for third graders.

EVALUATION DESIGN

To help decision-makers examine and improve the Principles of Learning initiative, this report is divided into sections that address the following four questions:

1. *Professional Development: What is the extent of district staff, principal, and teacher involvement in the POL implementation and professional development? What is the observed quality of POL professional development, and to what extent does POL professional development integrate the TEKS?*
2. *What is the observed quality of classroom implementation of the Principles of Learning?*
3. *To what extent have policies and practices of the district and campuses become supportive of the POL vision of teaching and learning?*
4. *How has the IFL partnership supported effective implementation of the POL approach to teaching and learning? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the partnership itself?*

For the 2001-02 evaluation of the POL initiative, data from a variety of sources were collected to address the questions listed above. Table 1 shows the sources of data used for the evaluation and describes the data collection for each source.

Table 1: Data Sources and Content of Data Collection for the Evaluation of the Principles of Learning Initiative, 2001-2002

Data Source	Content	Data Collection
Interviews with AISD and IFL program staff	• strengths and challenges in POL implementation • ideas for improving PD at various levels • views about the partnership	Spring 2002 3 AISD program managers 1 IFL fellow
Surveys of Principals, Instructional Specialists, and Teachers	• perceptions of progress in POL implementation • knowledge of POL • participation in and effectiveness of professional development activities • factors that impact implementation of POL	Spring 2002 *n*=85 principals 83% response rate *n*=39 instructional specialists estimated 48% response rate *n*=207 teachers 59% response rate
Employee Coordinated Survey	• impact of POL on student achievement • impact of LearningWalk letters	Winter 2002 *n*=62 campus administrators *n*=226 teachers
Observations of Professional Development and LearningWalks	ratings of implementation, design, pedagogy, and culture of the sessions*	2001-2002 school year 6 principals' seminars 2 teachers' sessions 4 LearningWalks
Classroom Observations	Observations focused on implementation of: • Clear Expectations • Accountable Talk • Academic Rigor**	Spring 2002 44 classrooms invited to participate; 34 teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools participated.

*A protocol for rating professional development and recording observations was adapted from the Horizon Research Inc. "Professional Development Observation Protocol" for Local Systemic Change projects.

**A rubric for classroom observations was developed using materials from the IFL and AISD, and a protocol was adapted from the Horizon Research Inc., "Classroom Observation Protocol."

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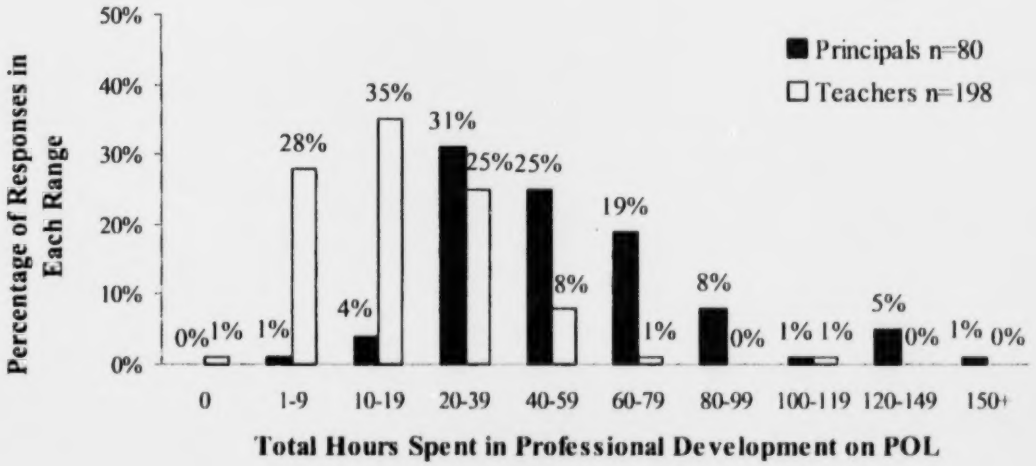
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING: STAFF INVOLVEMENT AND QUALITY

Principals, instructional specialists, and teachers participated in several types of professional development activities that incorporated training on the Principles of Learning. Although area superintendents also participated in POL-related professional development, they were considered part of the team of program leaders. Therefore, data on staff participation, perceptions of effectiveness, and the quality of professional development focuses on activities for principals, instructional specialists, and teachers.

Principals and teachers were asked to estimate the total number of hours they spent in professional development about the Principles of Learning in 2001-2002. The Spring 2002 survey data indicated that overall, principals reported attending more hours of professional development about the Principles of Learning than did teachers. (see Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Self-Reported Hours Spent in Professional Development on the Principles of Learning by Principals and Teachers



Source: Spring 2002 Teachers' Questionnaire and Principals' Questionnaire

The number of hours differed by group with the largest percentage of principals (31%) selecting the range of 20-39 hours (approximately 2 ½ to 5 days) during 2001-2002. The greatest percentage of teachers (35%) reported having spent 10-19 hours in professional development related to the POL initiative (approximately 1 ½-2 ½ days). Although the absolute difference in hours spent in professional development on POL is relatively small, Figure 1 shows how the distribution of responses by teachers are skewed

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toward the lower ranges in hours, while responses by principals are skewed toward higher ranges in hours. These data suggests that POL-related professional development may have reached principals more than it did teachers, as indicated by the overall amount of time spent and variety of activities. The way in which the various professional development activities were organized also suggests that, in comparison with principals' professional development about the Principles of Learning, teachers' activities were more voluntary and/or subject to the discretion of the principal.

Professional Development for Principals

The following types of professional development about the Principles of Learning were targeted for principals:

- ***Principals' seminars***. Seminars were led by area superintendents, their staff, and for all but one session, members of the IFL staff. Because four sessions were specified in the contract for the partnership, the IFL resident fellows were present at all the principals' seminars except the one in May 2002. Attendance by all principals at the seminars was expected. During 2001-2002, principals were requested to invite one teacher to attend each meeting.
- ***All-day planning meetings for the principals' seminars***. A small group of approximately six principals attended with one or two teachers from their campuses. This small group of principals was invited by area superintendents to work with program leaders to plan the professional development activities for the upcoming principals' seminars during 2001-2002.
- ***Area and vertical team meetings***. These meetings were led by area superintendents for principals in their areas; attendance by principals was expected. Frequency of area and vertical team meetings was at the discretion of each area superintendent.
- ***LearningWalks***[2]. Most area superintendents conducted LearningWalks at each of their campuses during 2001-2002. LearningWalks were attended by principals and other staff from the campus and central office.

Professional Development for Teachers

The following professional development activities related to the Principles of Learning were available to teachers:

- ***Campus-based staff meetings***. These meetings were led by principals who, at their discretion, devoted time in the meetings to discussion of the Principles. The

[2] See the glossary in Appendix A for a description of LearningWalks.

frequency of staff meetings and discussions of the Principles of Learning was determined by the principal.

- ***Campus-based professional development***. Time during two staff development days at the beginning of each semester was devoted to coverage of the Principles of Learning; all teachers were expected to attend. Materials were provided by the district's director of professional development, and principals had a choice of topics about the Principles of Learning to include, based on the needs of the campus faculty.
- ***Campus-based study groups for teachers and staff***. These professional development activities were at the discretion of principals and other campus leaders.
- ***Workshops and seminars for teachers led by staff of the Professional Development Academy***. At the discretion of the principal and area superintendent, PDA staff were invited to the campus to conduct a session or series of sessions for teachers according to a stated need of the campus. Alternatively, teachers could attend sessions at the PDA. New teachers to the district could also attend a PDA session that introduced the Principles of Learning.
- ***LearningWalks***. At the discretion of the area superintendent or principal, teachers participated in LearningWalks on their own campuses or other campuses as part of their POL-related professional development. Two elementary campuses used federal Title II funds to enable teachers to do LearningWalks.
- ***Grade level team meetings***. Attendance by teachers was expected; the frequency of meetings and the degree of focus on the Principles of Learning was at the discretion of department or grade-level team leaders.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR INSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALISTS

The following professional development activities related to the Principles of Learning were designed primarily for instructional specialists:

- ***Seminars for instructional specialists***. These seminars were held approximately once per month; specialists funded through Account for Learning were required to attend.
- ***Content-Focused Coaching seminars***. Thirteen day-long seminars were open to the instructional specialists and coaches at 27 selected campuses that participated in Content-Focused Coaching under the Academics 2002 grant. Attendance by staff involved in the grant's activities was expected at all sessions.

- ***LearningWalks***. Instructional specialists often participated in LearningWalks at their campuses with the principal and area superintendent.

Staff Participation and Effectiveness Ratings for POL-Related Professional Development

Principals and teachers were asked in Spring 2002 surveys about their level of participation in and perceptions of the effectiveness of the various POL-related professional development activities. For each professional development activity, principals and teachers indicated how many times they participated in that activity. To gauge effectiveness, principals and teachers were asked to rate how effective they found each professional development activity for helping them implement the Principles of Learning. Table 3 shows the frequency of participation by principals and teachers.

Table 3: Self-Reported Participation in POL-related Professional Development by Principals and Teachers

Activities	Principals (P) (n=85) / Teachers (T) (n=207)	Number of Times Participated in 01-02*				
		0 %	1-2 %	3-4 %	5-6 %	7 + %
Area or Vertical Team Mtgs.	P	1	1	11	11	**72**
	T	-	-	-	-	-
Grade Level Team Meetings	P	-	-	-	-	-
	T	13	9	7	10	**59**
LearningWalks at Own Campus	P	1	13	**31**	28	26
	T	23	**49**	19	6	3
LearningWalks at *Other* Campuses	P	14	25	**37**	18	7
	T	**72**	25	1	1	0.5
PD during Staff Meetings	P	-	-	-	-	-
	T	8	14	**36**	22	26
Planning Mtgs. for Principals' Seminars	P	**46**	25	14	9	5
	T	-	-	-	-	-
Principals' Seminars	P	0	5	**60**	26	6
	T	**54**	20	15	9	1
Study Groups on Campus	P	18	**22**	**22**	18	17
	T	**44**	29	12	5	10

*Highest percentages of responses by principals and teachers for each activity are in **bold**. The activities with the highest percentage of participation by principals and teachers each are boxed.
Source: Spring 2002 Teachers' Questionnaire and Principals' Questionnaire

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For principals, the most frequently attended professional development activities at which the Principles of Learning were discussed were the area or vertical team meetings. Seventy-two percent of principals reported attending these meetings seven or more times during 2001-02. Most principals (62%) rated area and vertical team meetings as "very effective" for helping them implement the Principles. Teachers reported participating in more grade level team meetings than any other activity listed on the survey, with 59% reporting that they participated seven or more times in grade level team meetings. Of all the professional development activities that teachers rated for effectiveness, a majority of teachers (56%) rated grade level team meetings as "very effective" for helping them implement the Principles of Learning.

LearningWalks

Table 3 shows that 85% of principals who responded to the survey participated in *at least* 3-4 LearningWalks on their campus, while 72% of responding teachers participated in 2 LearningWalks *or fewer* at their campus. Of the professional development activities listed in Table 3, LearningWalks deserve explanation regarding staff perceptions of effectiveness because they were a prominent practice in AISD's Principles of Learning initiative. Although there were many LearningWalks across the district, area superintendents sometimes organized them differently. At least one area superintendent organized meetings for campus staff from a few schools within that area (referred to as "cluster meetings"), where LearningWalks were part of the agenda. Two principals elected to use federal Title II funds for teacher professional development that involved LearningWalks. One teacher who participated in a LearningWalk responded on the Title II survey that, "This is an extremely valuable in-service...It helps pump you up when you see good examples." In general, LearningWalks appeared to offer high quality professional development and a notably collegial atmosphere to staff who participated.

One factor to consider in relation to teachers' participation in and their judgments about the effectiveness of LearningWalks is the differing opportunities to participate, depending on the campus or area. The variability in organization of LearningWalks by the different area superintendents and principals may be related to ratings of effectiveness, as shown in the survey data. Of the teachers who responded to the survey, 26% rated LearningWalks as "very effective" for helping them implement the Principles of Learning. In contrast, 49% of principals characterized LearningWalks as "very effective" for helping them implement the Principles at their campuses.

The impact of LearningWalk letters on teachers' instructional decisions appears to be relatively low, according to teachers' survey responses. Teachers were asked about

the impact of LearningWalk letters on their practice, and 61% of teachers who responded reported that the letter reinforced either their prior classroom instruction, or their prior views about effective instruction. The effects of the LearningWalks letters as reported by teachers suggest that the letters elicited few changes in classroom practices or views about instruction. Another 15% of teachers who responded to the question reported that the LearningWalks letters had no impact on their view or instruction. A small proportion of teachers (21%) reported that LearningWalk letters gave them ideas about how to change their classroom instruction. In general, most teachers appeared to believe they were already implementing the Principles of Learning, or practices like them. For teachers, the impact of the LearningWalk letter on instructional practice appears to differ from that of participating in a LearningWalk group. Participation in a LearningWalk might be more helpful for understanding the Principles of Learning and how they are manifested in classroom instruction and student work. A LearningWalk letter, however, requires teachers to make a translation of the letter's content to classroom practice. By design, LearningWalks provide components of effective professional development that reaffirm standards set by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) in terms of context, process, and content (NSDC, 2002). Because teachers attended fewer LearningWalks than principals, however, it remains to be seen how effective LearningWalks may be as an avenue for teachers' professional development.

QUALITY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To assess the quality of selected professional development sessions, evaluators adapted a protocol designed by Horizon Research Inc. (entitled *2001-2002 Local Systemic Change Professional Development Observation Protocol*)[3]. The protocol is based on standards for professional development developed by the National Staff Development Council, and was adapted to include components relevant to professional development about the Principles of Learning. The revised protocol included the following components of professional development:

- design—the structure of the session, including the time allotted for activities, the strategies, assigned roles, and resources for the session
- implementation—the effectiveness with which the facilitator implemented the design, as well as the likelihood that the session would move the participants forward in their capacity as teachers and/or leaders

[3] The original protocol developed by Horizon Research Inc. may be downloaded at: http://www.horizon-research.com/LSC/manual/0102/existing.php.

- Principles of Learning content—the depth and breadth of attention to POL and/or the content area of focus, and its appropriateness for participants' backgrounds and learning needs
- pedagogy—quality of attention to student thinking and learning, classroom practice and curriculum materials (in relation to the participants' backgrounds and learning needs)
- culture—extent and nature of the engagement of participants in the session (e.g., interaction among participants and with facilitators, participants' willingness to share ideas and take intellectual risks)
- leadership content (where appropriate)—quality of leadership content for preparing participants to be instructional leaders at their campuses (e.g., information on strategies for mentoring/coaching peers)

A team of evaluators was trained to use the professional development observation protocol by an evaluator experienced in using the instrument. Training materials and videos that showed samples of professional development workshops were obtained from Horizon Research, Inc. for the purpose of preparing the evaluators who would rate the quality of professional development. For four of the twelve professional development sessions, a pair of evaluators rated the same session independently, and then checked for reliability of their ratings. Evaluators rated professional development sessions on each component. Next, an overall rating was used to summarize the quality of professional development, which was defined in terms of how likely it was that participation in the session would increase participants' ability to provide high-quality classroom instruction or professional development to others (i.e., perform as instructional leaders). See Appendix B for an excerpt of the ratings descriptions from the protocol. Overall ratings on the protocol range from 1—for ineffective professional development—to 5 for professional development that is exemplary. At the level of 3—for "Beginning Stages of Effective Professional Development," the ratings were further distinguished for "low," "solid," or "high" quality.

Twelve professional development sessions were rated, including six sessions aimed predominantly at principals, two for teachers (both of which were led by staff from the Professional Development Academy), and four LearningWalks. The average overall rating for professional development that was observed was a "3-high," suggesting that professional development sessions were purposeful and at times effective, but that there were some weaknesses. The "3-high" rating was also the average rating for each of the three types of professional development (that is, sessions for principals, teachers, and LearningWalks). Ratings of the components showed that overall, the highest mean

ratings were given for implementation (3.6) (range: 2.5 to5) and culture (3.5) (range 2.4 to 4). The lowest ratings were in the area of pedagogy (3.0) (range: 2.5 to 4 out of a possible 5).

Ratings and observations of professional development indicate that POL-related sessions for principals and those led by PDA staff for teachers were of solid quality, especially in design and implementation. At several sessions in 2001-2002, area superintendents and PDA staff were observed to demonstrate Accountable Talk in ways that would allow their audience to see this Principle in action before discussing it in more detail during the professional development session. Academic Rigor was illustrated in several ways, including having participants work through mathematics problems and then discuss their solutions with others. In a LearningWalk, one area superintendent was observed to use old LearningWalk letters during campus LearningWalks to engage participants in discussions of the campuses' progress and their future goals. With teachers and principals, PDA staff led discussions about a fundamental idea behind the Principles—that an effort-based learning environment could lead students to achieve rigorous learning standards.

Under the protocol for assessing professional development, *culture* was also rated highly in observations of professional development for principals; however, some evaluators made note of occasional disengagement among participants, especially when the sessions were very large. For example, at several principals' meetings, evaluators observed that participants were not always intellectually engaged in presentations or discussions. In some cases, participants had not read the required articles that would be a focus of discussion during the session, thereby making meaningful discussion about the articles difficult. Extraneous comments or conversations occurred during these larger sessions, or principals often excused themselves from their tables to answer or return phone calls. At other times, principals were observed to give reasoned, critical feedback to area superintendents about materials or exercises that were part of their sessions. Another observation related to culture was the tendency of participants, most commonly in LearningWalks, to cite positive evidence of the implementation of the Principles, without a critical discussion of specific weaknesses and how they could be addressed.

Observations of professional development for teachers, which were led in relatively small groups by staff of the Professional Development Academy, appeared to focus on specific tools that would help teachers understand the Principles of Learning and implement them. At these sessions, groups were much smaller in comparison with sessions for principals, and teachers were highly engaged in the discussions. PDA facilitators demonstrated skill and sensitivity to the teachers' needs, such as initiating

more discussion about the Principles of Learning and the philosophy behind them when teachers raised questions. Much of at least one session also focused on ways to implement practices associated with the Principles in their classrooms through discussions of sample assignments and materials in the area of history and social studies.

Program Leaders' Perspectives on Professional Development

Several program leaders were interviewed about the POL initiative, and also asked to discuss training and support for principals and teachers. One suggestion proposed was to cluster principals according to "where they are in their learning." In this way, principals would be able to study the implementation over time so they could share best practices and be better trained to lead teachers. This program leader also cited the need for a "vehicle for novice people" where the principals—with the assistance of district's Principals' Academy—could be organized as a cohort and assigned to a mentor so that they could be assisted in learning about the Principles of Learning.

For teachers, one program leader in the POL initiative cited the need to help teachers examine practice so that they can implement an effort-based system of learning. This leader added that "the thread needs to run throughout training and everywhere." Also, with the district's curriculum guides (produced in part by staff in the Division of Curriculum), staff development could be better planned in advance of the new school year for targeting teachers at specific grade levels and/or content areas.

Integration of the TEKS

One priority for the district is the alignment of all instructional activities in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). To better understand the integration of the TEKS with professional development on the Principles of Learning, principals and teachers were asked whether discussions of the TEKS were included in POL-related professional development. Eighty-eight percent of principals and 80% of teachers reported that the TEKS were integrated. Observations of professional development corroborated the survey data on the TEKS as integral to sessions for principals, instructional specialists, and teachers. The Principals of Learning became a tool for planning how to take the TEKS to instructional activities in meaningful and challenging ways for students. Finally, 80% of principals, 82% of instructional specialists, and 66% of teachers agreed that the TEKS have had a positive effect on their ability to help implement the Principles of Learning. The TEKS were an integral part of POL-related professional development led by PDA staff, but since participation in these sessions varied, it is not clear to what extent this understanding was prevalent among teachers across the district.

Classroom Implementation of the Principles of Learning

Approximately half of the principals who responded to the spring survey described their school's progress in implementing the Principles of Learning as "well along in implementing." Furthermore, 71% of principals reported that *70% or more* of teachers at their campuses were implementing the Principles of Learning in 2001-2002, compared with 52% of principals who reported this degree of implementation for 2000-2001. To further assess the implementation of classroom practices that incorporated the Principles of Learning, a sample of classrooms was observed in Spring 2002.

Description of Classroom Observations

Forty-three teachers were invited in Spring 2002 to participate in a classroom observation related to the Principles of Learning. The invited group of teachers included a random sample of 16 elementary and middle school math teachers observed as part of the evaluation of the ACME project in AISD (Batchelder, Piñon, & Samii-Shore, 2002) and the POL evaluation. A stratified random sample was drawn to balance language arts and mathematics lessons. For elementary and middle school language arts lessons, thirteen teachers were invited to participate. Four high school language arts and four high school mathematics teachers were also invited. Eight teachers declined to participate in the classroom observations, two teachers were ineligible, and seven were replaced from a corresponding sample that was randomly drawn. Due to constraints on time and the upcoming TAAS in Spring 2002, three teachers were not replaced.

In all, 34 classrooms were rated for evidence of the three targeted Principles of Learning (Clear Expectations, Accountable Talk, and Academic Rigor). Elementary and secondary classrooms were observed in several different content areas (see Table 4). During the pre-observation interview with teachers, evaluators discussed class schedules and specified that observations would occur during their mathematics or language arts lessons. However, in two elementary classrooms, the teacher was observed leading lessons in other content areas, specifically, social studies and science. In three other cases, the teacher led a math lesson during the observation instead of a language arts lesson as was planned beforehand. Most of the observations were of mathematics lessons (68%) and at the elementary level (68%), although a significant minority were of language arts lessons (26%) and in high school classrooms (24%). Note that in a separate evaluation of AISD's pre-kindergarten program, a sample of pre-kindergarten classes was observed for evidence of the implementation of the targeted Principles in 2000-2001 as

well. Due to the differing purposes of that evaluation from this one, Curry (2002) used a different instrument to assess implementation.

Table 4: Number and Content Area of POL Classroom Observations

	Mathematics Observations	Language Arts Observations	Other Content Area Observations	Total Number of Observations
Elementary Schools	18	3	2	23
Middle Schools	1	2	0	3
High Schools	4	4	0	8
All Schools	23	9	2	34

Source: Spring 2002 Classroom Observations

Description of the Classroom Observation Rubric

Classrooms were rated using a rubric developed by a team of evaluators at AISD, and several sources of information were used to develop the rubric. The rubric was designed primarily by using the features and indicators of the targeted Principles of Learning, which were created by the Institute for Learning[4]. See Appendix C for a copy of the rubric and scale definitions. The evaluation team observed classrooms at several campuses to pilot the rubric and check for reliability.

A number of classroom structures and activities were identified as pertinent to implementing the Principles of Learning. Two included the way classroom activities for the students were structured (for example, as whole group, small group, or individuals) and the type of activities in which students were engaged. Most often, students worked in a large group (n=29 observations) or as individuals (n=25 observations), and sometimes in small groups (n=12). (Note that more than one classroom structure, i.e., group *and* individual work could occur within one whole lesson observed.) Students were often engaged in large group discussions (in 25 of the 34 of observations) or in problem solving or investigation (n=21), and were somewhat less frequently involved in reading, writing, or reflecting on instructional content (n=15), or in small group discussions (n=7)[5].

[4] Institute for Learning, University of Pittsburgh, website http://www.instituteforlearning.org. A protocol developed by Horizon Research Inc. (2001) for classroom observations was adapted and used to help record field notes related to classroom characteristics and the way that classroom activities were structured. Finally, the evaluation team used the draft of a rubric written by district administrators in 2000-2001 that was developed for discussing the campus-level implementation of the Principles (AISD, 2001).

[5] Lessons could include more than one type of activity.

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An important idea of the Principles of Learning is that students should understand and be able to articulate the purpose of their work and judge the quality of it. In about half of the observations, raters reported that students could state the purpose of the assignment. In 11 of the observations where students were queried (n=27) about the quality of their work, students were able to make judgments using a rubric or criteria chart. Students were approached only if the structure of the class would make such queries unintrusive.

To arrive at an overall classroom implementation rating of the Principles, evaluators first rated the implementation of each targeted Principle on a 5-point scale, with '0' signifying the absence of a Principle's implementation, and '4' signifying exemplary use of that Principle. Then evaluators used the three individual Principle ratings and information from field notes to assign an overall rating of classroom implementation of the Principles of Learning. This rating scheme had three levels that reflected weak, moderate, or strong implementation. Overall ratings in one of the three categories were based on the two (or three) consistent Principle ratings that fell into a single category (0 or 1 for weak implementation; 2 for moderate implementation; and 3 or 4 for strong implementation) and another code that was one rating level up or down on the scale.

Levels of Implementation of the Principles of Learning

Weak Implementation

Classroom lessons rated as weak in implementation reflected lessons that generally did not use the targeted Principles at all, or that did not incorporate at least two of the Principles in any meaningful way. For example, in one observed high school algebra classroom, the teacher asked students to take out their homework, told the students the answers to the questions, and asked for students to indicate which items were problematic. As students asked questions about the algebra problems, the teacher told them the procedure for solving the problem and then showed the work on the board. There were no criteria charts or rubrics for good work displayed in the classroom, and students who were queried about their work stated that they could look up the answers in the back of their text to see if their work had yielded the right answers. Most students participated in the discussion only reluctantly, and those who were queried did not know why the work they were doing was important.

The lesson described above was coded as weak in implementation because the students passively received information, rather than actively constructing their understanding. The teacher used strategies that focused students on finding the right

answer or following predetermined procedures, instead of guiding them to develop deep understandings of the material. In this lesson, the teacher did not making academic expectations clear to students. Perhaps because expectations were not clear, students in this classroom and others rated as weak in implementation, in general, could not state the underlying purpose of the lesson and usually could not judge their work based on stated criteria. As one student explained, "I know what [grade] I get when the teacher gives it [my work] back." In lessons rated as weak in implementation, even when teachers used the Principles of Learning, the Principles did not appear to effectively lead students to deeper conceptual understandings of the material. In this lesson, students' understandings of the topic rarely advanced because they did not grapple actively with the underlying concepts. In the classrooms rated as weak in implementation, students were at times exposed to rigorous assignments, but the quality of the lesson was eroded by a focus on memorization, algorithms, or procedures.

Moderate Implementation

In classrooms rated as moderate in implementation, teachers implemented the targeted Principles of Learning, but limitations were observed. Teachers in classrooms rated as moderate in implementation used the Principles, but appeared not to have yet developed a deep understanding of them. As such, they used many of the tools of the targeted Principles, but this use did not lead to a rich conceptual understanding for students. For example, one teacher led a discussion of a classic play, but did not encourage students to critically analyze statements made by either the teacher or their classmates. Most often classroom discussions were funneled through the teacher rather than having students speak freely with each other. In this classroom, students reported using the teacher-developed rubrics as a way to see what grade they would get. One student reported, "I can see that I will get a 'B' if I do this much work, or an 'A' if I do more." Most classrooms rated as moderate used rubrics, but as with the teacher in this classroom, students were not involved in explicating the criteria. This lesson was rigorous for the students who were actively engaged in the discussion, but students who were less engaged were not encouraged to participate.

Strong Implementation

At the strong level of implementation, the teachers and almost all students in the classroom were actively engaged in deepening their understanding of the content. Teachers skillfully facilitated discussions of key issues in a way that created an atmosphere of investigation and collegial respect for the ideas of others. Students were often directed to discuss ideas with each other, either in group discussions or peer

meetings. In one classroom, a group of second grade students met in pairs to edit a paper they were going to publish. There was a rich, meaningful exploration of the language arts content by both students and the teacher in this classroom. Another example was a high school class in which students grappled with the contents of the play, "Long Days' Journey into Night." The teacher told her students, "The goal here is not to tell you what the play means, but to all struggle with its meaning. Why does the author do what he does?" This classroom was coded as strong in implementation because in the discussion of the play, multiple meanings were assumed to exist and students' perspectives were encouraged and valued. In one classroom a student spontaneously asked, "Why are we doing this?" The teacher proceeded to facilitate a discussion of the possible future uses of the knowledge.

Expectations at this level of implementation were much more clear to students, who were often involved in explicating the criteria for a project. In classrooms rated as strong implementation, students referred to rubrics often throughout the lesson, often comparing the project they were working on to the rubric and then modifying their work based on the information contained in the rubric. Two students who were working on editing a paper referred to the criteria chart about how to peer edit, one said, "Do you think this is spelled right?" The second student looked at the rubric then replied, "I don't know, let's look it up to be sure." The teacher in this class reported, "I leave these [the rubrics] up so the students have them when they need them."

Patterns of Classroom Implementation

The distribution of ratings by level of implementation (weak, moderate, or strong) were similar regardless of school level (see Table 5). The majority of the lessons at both the elementary and secondary levels were rated as weak in implementation of the Principles of Learning (11 of 23 elementary and 5 of 11 secondary observations), while a significant portion were rated as moderate in implementation (6 elementary and 2 secondary observations). A smaller proportion were rated as strong in implementation (4 elementary and 1 secondary observation). This finding is somewhat surprising, given the anecdotes that high school teachers are more likely to use traditional teaching methods than elementary school teachers. The finding also suggested that information about how to implement the Principles of Learning may be reaching teachers at *all* campus levels (albeit to differing degrees in quality). Note that ratings of the implementation of each targeted Principle could differ. The table on Appendix D shows disaggregated ratings by Principle (i.e., Clear Expectations, Accountable Talk, and Academic Rigor).

Table 5: Principles of Learning Implementation: Number of Classrooms Rated at each Overall Level of Implementation

	Classroom Rating		
	Weak	Moderate	Strong
All Levels (*n*=34)	16	8	5
Elementary Schools (*n*=23)	11	6	4
Secondary Schools (*n*=11)	5	2	1

Source: Spring 2002 Classroom Observations

The level at which a classroom was rated overall (i.e., *weak*, *moderate*, or *strong*) was related to specific features of the classroom's lesson and/or activities. This finding is informative, although not surprising. Classroom features that are related to higher ratings either represent indicators of the underlying Principles (for example, an indicator of a classroom in which the Principle of Clear Expectations is being implemented is that students can judge the value of their work using a rubric) or the classroom features are logically linked to underlying indicators (for example, in a classroom where students are grouped as pairs, it is more likely that student-to-student talk will occur –an indicator of Accountable Talk). In classrooms where students were working in pairs or engaged in small groups, lessons were significantly more likely to be rated as *strong* in implementation than classroom lessons where these features were not present[6]. Additionally, in classrooms where at least part of the lesson included a lecture by the teacher, lessons tended to be rated lower in implementation than in classrooms where lecture was not a major component of the lesson.[7] Finally, in classrooms where students could describe the purpose of their work and judge the quality of their work according to standards, lessons were significantly more likely to be rated as *moderate* or *strong* in implementation than in those classrooms where students could not describe the purpose of their assignments or judge the quality of their work[8].

[6] Mann-Whitney tests were statistically significant at the $p<.05$ level.
[7] Mann-Whitney tests, $p<.06$ trend.
[8] Mann-Whitney tests were statistically significant at the $p<.01$ level.

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Campus and District Support of the Principles of Learning

Collegial Support for the Principles of Learning Implementation

Two-way accountability is an element of the Principles of Learning initiative that emphasizes the importance of the district's and campuses' support of their staff members as learners. While teachers and administrators are working to implement the Principles in campuses and classrooms, it is vital that they have the support they need from both the IFL and the district. The Institute for Learning offers an illustration: "[A] principal may not hold a teacher accountable for knowledge of a particular practice or content, unless professional development about that topic has been offered" (IFL, 2002). To assess staff members' perceptions of the district's support for the initiative, teachers were asked several questions on their Spring 2002 survey. Teachers were also queried about the extent of collaboration with peers in learning about and implementing the Principles of Learning. Most teachers agreed that:

- their principal supports implementation of the Principles of Learning (95% of the respondents, or n=193),
- they feel supported by their colleagues to try out new ideas related to the Principles of Learning (73% of respondents, or n=148), and
- teachers at their school talk about new ways to implement the Principles of Learning in their classrooms (56%, or n=113).

Lack of Time

A lack of time appeared to be a major factor that hindered discussions about the Principles of Learning:

- 65% of teachers *disagreed* with the statement, *"I have time during the school week to work with my colleagues on implementing the Principles of Learning in my classroom."* Just 20% of the teachers surveyed agreed with this statement.

While most teachers perceived collegial support in implementing the Principles, they may not have discussed the ideas and their implementation on an ongoing basis with their colleagues or may not have had the time to do so. Alternatively, these survey responses might indicate that discussions occurred on some campuses but not others on a regular basis, thereby leading to varied learning opportunities for teachers across the district.

Insufficient time for working on the Principles of Learning implementation was also cited by instructional specialists. Approximately half of the instructional specialists (51%, or n=20) who responded to the Spring 2002 survey reported that they *disagreed* with the following statement: *"I have time during the school week to work with campus*

staff on how to implement the Principles of Learning." Furthermore, the greatest job challenge that instructional specialists selected out of nine listed was "having adequate time to work with teachers." This option was selected by 72% (n=28) of instructional specialists who responded to the survey.

Two program leaders for the POL initiative mentioned the lack of time as a factor in the progress of the implementation (for district staff overall), but differed in their views about it. One leader asserted that the claim of insufficient time was an excuse for not engaging fully in the implementation. It is not known, for example, how principals' time for professional development on the Principles is currently being used, and how the principal is providing focus and structure for these activities. Another program leader, however, mentioned the possibility that implementation of the Principles might erode because even at the current time, principals do not have time to work with teachers. According to this leader, time for teacher learning has been a challenge to implementing the targeted Principles. While program leaders may acknowledge the inadequate amounts of time for study and professional development of the Principles by staff, no clear strategies for addressing the issue have emerged. In interviews, program leaders cited teachers' learning of the Principles as a need, such that teachers could "examine practice so that they can implement an effort-based system of learning," as one leader stated. Although teachers' deep understanding of the ideas in the Principles of Learning was a goal stated by program leaders, the data point to evidence that most teachers do not have sufficient time to achieve this level of understanding.

Differences in Learning Opportunities

To better understand the variation in implementation in the district, it is useful to point out that even for principals, learning opportunities about the Principles of Learning differed. Some differences in learning opportunities occurred by design, according to program leaders. For example, a small number of principals were involved in planning meetings with area superintendents prior to the Principals' Seminars. Several of these principals also attended IFL-sponsored conferences out of town with area superintendents. The IFL conferences enabled staff to talk about effective practices in leadership and instruction as well as exchange ideas with counterparts in other districts that had partnerships with the IFL. At one campus, the principal agreed to pilot the NetLearn software[9] for learning about and discussing the Principles with teachers.

[9] NetLearn software is an interactive professional development resource on CD-ROM. The CD contains video, audio, text, and scanned artifacts and was developed to support the professional development efforts of IFL and the educators in its partnering districts.

Teachers met regularly to study the videos that are part of the software and discuss the Principles of Learning. This learning opportunity undoubtedly contributed to a stronger understanding of the Principles by teachers at this campus. Finally, at a few campuses, IFL staff visited with the principal and a few teachers in LearningWalks or sessions to discuss a particular content area, such as social studies. In summary, some principals (and teachers) had additional avenues to learn about the Principles of Learning others did not. Although this variability was anticipated by program leaders for the initiative, the discrepancies in opportunities for learning by principals and teachers may help explain the variation in levels of implementation observed (see Classroom Implementation of the Principles of Learning).

Professional Development for New Teachers and Principals

The variation in professional development opportunities points to a larger need for structures that support on-going professional development about the Principles of Learning. One basic and recurring need is for professional development that addresses the needs of new teachers and principals in the district. For the past five years, over one-third of elementary and middle school principals in the district were new to their jobs with one to three years of experience as administrators (Batchelder, 2002). Additionally, the turnover rate among teachers and professional staff at campuses was approximately 22% in 2001-2002. Without an established structure for assessing and addressing teachers' needs as learners, the district cannot expect teachers to readily implement the Principles of Learning. Additionally, principals will be hard-pressed to direct the learning of teachers on their campuses about the Principles of Learning if they themselves do not have adequate preparation for the focus on instruction and leadership that is at the heart of the initiative.

Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment with the Principles of Learning

The district's curriculum frameworks, and to a slightly lesser extent, instructional materials are well-aligned with the TEKS. In turn, the new TAKS assessment will be aligned with the TEKS. The Principles of Learning are based partly on a philosophy that aptitude can, and should be, assessed using multiple measures. Students, for example, should ideally be able to demonstrate more or different kinds of learning than what the TAKS may indicate. The state's reliance on the TAKS as the sole measure of student learning and achievement could therefore, in itself, hinder a full implementation of the Principles of Learning at the district level if classroom instruction were to become focused on the TAKS as the sole measure of student learning.

THE AISD-IFL PARTNERSHIP

Information about the key strengths and limitations of the partnership may be useful for program and district leaders as they develop future plans in relation to the Principles of Learning initiative. Observational and interview data were used to document primary strengths and limitations in the AISD-IFL partnership.

STRENGTHS

Program leaders cited a variety of resources that IFL brought to the district as a strength.. The Principles of Learning themselves were named as a success in the partnership along with "all the literature and research they [IFL] brought to us." One program leader went on to observe that, "We [AISD] as a system did not read those kinds of articles before. The whole body of knowledge they brought was a success." Consultations with Lauren Resnick were also mentioned as "powerful and extremely helpful" to the district. The partnership also brought AISD's administrators into contact with other districts' staff who had partnerships with the IFL. By exchanging ideas regarding practices such as coaching that were occurring in Denver or Providence, for example, one district leader felt that the AISD team was better able to organize its own plans for implementing professional development related to the POL initiative. Finally, the district's IFL liaison in 2001-2002 was also mentioned as a positive resource, especially with regard to her responsiveness to staff members' questions and concerns.

A key strength in the partnership was the vision provided by IFL staff to the district's administrators regarding organizational and curriculum issues. The IFL staff's independent and external point of view was important for helping district staff recognize that a more aligned and coherent curriculum in core subject areas was needed, i.e., curriculum matrices and instructional planning guides that defined and added specificity to the TEKS. District administrators had presented the TEKS as the district's curriculum during the first full year of the partnership (2000-2001). However, there were few measures in place to ensure that students across the district received the same instructional content or quality in the four major content areas (mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies). The implementation of the district's curriculum elementary language arts, known as Balanced Literacy, provides one illustration. At the Principals' Seminar in September 2001, principals were asked to discuss how Balanced Literacy was being implemented at their campuses, and principals described approaches that varied widely. AISD's curriculum staff worked to develop instructional planning guides for implementing TEKS-based instruction starting in Spring 2002. The purpose

was to align the curriculum and provide specificity where there were gaps in the TEKS. The result of this work included the following:

- specific, defined guides for instruction across all grade levels in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies that contained specific curriculum objectives and observable indicators,
- a preliminary plan for professional development for instructional specialists and teachers that focused on the instructional guides, and
- a comprehensive plan for assessment, in the form of benchmark tests that are based on the curriculum (which in turn, is based on the TEKS) to assess students' learning at several points during the year.

The partnership with the IFL was not the sole stimulus for the added focus on instruction, though. The upcoming state assessment, TAKS, lent additional momentum to the development of the instructional planning guides based on the TEKS. In Winter 2002, a director of curriculum was added to the district's staff. The director coordinated the work of curriculum staff in developing the aligned curriculum and instructional planning guides for teachers and instructional specialists. These guides specify the TEKS and associated skills that "teachers should teach and students should learn" at every grade level across the district (AISD, 2002). With a specific, defined curriculum in place, one program leader noted that staff development could thereby be planned accordingly. The activities that were involved in the partnership, along with other factors internal to the district, appeared to converge toward an improved focus on instructional issues at all levels that, in turn, has influenced at least some of the decision-making processes in the district.

LIMITATIONS

One avenue for improvement in the partnership appeared to stem from issues related to communication and feedback. Consistency of focus was one challenge cited by program leaders. District leaders described how plans and materials for professional development had to be re-worked by the district's leaders prior to professional development because the plans developed by the IFL staff did not meet the needs of district staff. District leaders also cited the need for more feedback loops between IFL and district staff who attended meetings out of town. Two program leaders mentioned that administrators were not assisted in how to take information back to the district for dissemination, yet AISD staff were often asked to bring their ideas to conferences. For some leaders in the district, this situation raised questions about the balance of give-and-take in the partnership. The IFL is a research institute whose work is constantly

evolving. Staff from the IFL often solicited ideas and evidence about the on-going effort to incorporate the Principles of Learning into AISD's instructional settings for the purposes of their research, but district staff also wanted on-going support for addressing specific needs in AISD. Finally, program leaders have suggested that the partnership's effectiveness could have been stronger from the beginning if the IFL had more openly addressed the district's need for focus in the area of instruction.

A critical concern cited by district leaders and administrators was the cost of the partnership. One leader questioned whether the district was "getting enough bang for their buck." Another leader cited general concerns about the district's budget in upcoming years. Although a contract for the partnership was developed and costs were covered by grants and specified funding sources in the district (see the Overview section, "Funding for the Initiative"), IFL reportedly levied extra charges on the district. Two leaders went on to suggest that the partnership should not have to exist in its current form (and at its current cost) on a long-term basis. One program leader suggested, "It should not be a forever partnership—it should be for building capacity, and then [we should be] able to go back to them when we need help." Another program leader proposed that the district can do the same kind of work on its own, and then consult with IFL staff as necessary.

Without a doubt, the partnership has given the district valuable assistance in the areas of educational leadership and instructional practice. With respect to the latter, there was evidence that district staff have based decision-making and other changes with instructional practices in mind. One program leader explained:

> I see us as becoming more focused. For example, because of the curriculum [focus], we decided not to go with [a specific technology-based mode of professional development]. We turned it down in favor of the district curriculum. We're keeping a focus for more consistency.

Monthly meetings for principals are no longer referred to as "operations meetings," but "instructional management meetings," where discussions about operations will be kept to a minimum. On the other hand, while improvements in instructional leadership are evident, some staff groups in the district experienced variability in access to these opportunities. In this way, the net effect of the IFL's nested learning community has been a concentration of theoretical and practical knowledge at the top of the district hierarchy with less headway being made at the level of the classroom. While time for working with teachers is a factor cited by many, the allocation of time on professional development and substantive discussions about implementing the Principles would go far in reducing the variability in the implementation seen in classrooms.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STRENGTHS

During the second year of the Principles of Learning initiative, area superintendents, principals, instructional specialists, and teachers continued to learn about the Principles and how to implement them. In Spring 2002, professional development and implementation efforts coincided with AISD's preparations for the new Texas assessment, TAKS, to be administered in 2002-2003—most notably in the development of the curriculum and instructional planning guides that were aligned with the TEKS. The Principles of Learning embrace the importance of alignment between instructional content, the manner in which it is taught and learned, and assessment. The Principles also support the values of (a) student effort in building aptitude, (b) equity in learning opportunities for all students, and (c) the role of students in actively managing their learning. Observational and survey data show that the AISD-IFL partnership and the POL initiative itself have yielded the following positive results or benefits:

- The implementation of practices aligned with the Principles of Learning and a common language among many educators in the district about effective leadership and classroom instruction has continued. Principals reported that their campuses were implementing the Principles of Learning at high rates during 2001-2002, in comparison with the first year of implementation in 2000-2001. Also, 85% of principals reported that they had participated in *at least* 3 LearningWalks at their campuses during 2001-2002, and 61% reported they had participated in *at least* 3 LearningWalks at *other* campuses.
- Professional development for principals, teachers, and instructional specialists often included information about the Principles of Learning and how to make them explicit in the curriculum content. Most notably, a large majority of principals (88%) and teachers (80%) who responded to the Spring 2002 surveys reported that POL-related professional development included discussions of the TEKS. These results help demonstrate that the research-based instructional practices described by the Principles can be integrated with the state's learning standards.
- Additional focus by district administrators on instructional practice in the classroom has influenced decision-making about other initiatives and the use of funds (e.g., federal grant monies).
- Program leaders cited the following benefits: resources from the Institute for Learning in the form of consultations with the director and the liaison assigned to

the district in 2001-2002, contacts with other districts that had partnerships with the IFL and were engaged in similar initiatives, and the literature and research-based practices that AISD staff had opportunities to read and discuss.

CHALLENGES

Despite the strengths of the initiative, data and observations from the Principles of Learning evaluation indicated the following challenges:

- Opportunities for professional development differed across groups of staff, with principals citing more time (as shown in the survey data) and opportunities for professional development than teachers. In estimating the total number of hours spent on professional development related to the Principles of Learning, 31% of principals reported spending 20-39 hours in POL-related professional development, but a majority responded that they had spent more time than that. Of the teachers, 63% responded that they had participated in no more than 19 hours on professional development related to the Principles of Learning. By design, much of the POL-related professional development involved principals, who were, in turn, expected to work with teachers. The data suggest though, that the quantity of professional development for teachers was mixed, and that additional professional development for teachers might be helpful in order to implement the Principles more effectively.
- Opportunities for professional development for principals as well as for teachers varied across the district. Some principals participated in activities (e.g., conferences held by the IFL, pilot work with the NetLearn project, or LearningWalks by IFL staff) that would likely enhance their understanding of the Principles of Learning and lead to stronger implementation at their campuses. The variability in opportunities is one factor that may be related to the differences in implementation that were observed across the district. Although this aspect of the initiative was planned, the activities may have enhanced understanding of the Principles of Learning for *some* principals and played a role in the uneven levels of implementation.
- Observational data from classrooms showed that variability in the quality and degree of implementation of the Principles of Learning exists in classrooms across the district. Of 34 classrooms that were observed, 47% were rated as weak in overall implementation of the Principles of Learning, 24% were rated as moderate in implementation, and 15% were rated as strong.

- Program leaders, principals, teachers, and instructional specialists cited a lack of time for professional development activities about the Principles of Learning.
- Despite the strengths of the initiative, some district program leaders have cited a concern about the costs involved in the partnership with the IFL.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Principles of Learning initiative involves a continuous focus on high quality instructional practice and leadership. The IFL has provided valuable resources and assistance to the district, not just in preparation for the upcoming TAKS, but in motivating increased staff attention on instructional practice in the classroom and discussion of how to foster student aptitude through effort. These aspects of the POL initiative help address current and important issues for the district in its ongoing effort to address achievement gaps between White students and African American as well as Hispanic students, and improvements in teaching and learning to benefit all students. The Principles of Learning initiative should therefore continue in the district with some modifications, especially in the area of professional development, as described below. Professional development is key to the district's implementation of the Principles of Learning. Under the AISD-IFL partnership, many professional development activities have been aligned with the standards set forth by the National Staff Development Council, and these activities are suited for long-term change and improvement. The following four recommendations are related to professional development and are offered as a result of the evaluation of the Principles of Learning initiative:

1. *District administrators and program leaders must communicate a clear message about the Principles of Learning initiative. Educators at all levels must understand that the Principles of Learning initiative is a priority and that implementation of the Principles is expected on every campus. Eliminate mixed messages and reinforce support for the initiative through an established system for professional development.*

Program leaders for the initiative incorporated different learning opportunities for principals across the district. One campus, for example, had the opportunity to participate in a pilot of the IFL's NetLearn software. Additionally, the survey data about participation in POL-related professional development suggests that learning opportunities focused more on administrators than teachers. Although experts in educational reform (e.g., Elmore, 2000) describe the importance of district leaders in guiding instructional improvement, professional development and implementation efforts related to the Principles of Learning must better reach all classrooms. District leaders

need to ensure that variable opportunities for professional development do not lead to a mixed message about differential expectations about POL implementation at some campuses, or that the Principles of Learning initiative is mostly a top-heavy reform effort in a trial phase.

More importantly, however, district leaders need to ensure that all staff and new principals and teachers in the district have opportunities to learn about the Principles of Learning and become thoroughly immersed in this culture of learning espoused by AISD. It is crucial that new staff have sufficient opportunities to become familiar with the Principles of Learning from their perspectives and experiences as learners. If district leaders ensure that avenues for professional development are in place to target new staff, there will be a greater chance that professional learning and the research-based practices of the Principles will continue to develop across the district.

In general, tighter structures for professional development are needed, and the issue of creating time for professional development needs to be more clearly addressed. (See, for example, Raywid, 1993; Hackman & Berry, 2000). Targeted avenues for professional development that are followed up with, for example, coaching or mentoring opportunities will ensure that principals' and teachers' learning needs are being met and that all learners are expanding their understanding about effective instructional practice and leadership. Based on past research on the adoption of new practices in educational settings, such as in the area of technology, innovations are more likely to make an impact when a "critical mass" of staff adopting the new practices is achieved (SEDL, 2001). For AISD, the proportion of staff implementing the Principles would be maintained at a higher degree with ongoing opportunities for experienced and novice staff alike, given the turnover rates of principals and teachers in AISD. For example, if professional development structures are enhanced such that a cadre of more experienced teachers at each campus mentor other teachers in conjunction with instructional specialists, campuses will be in a stronger position to improve instructional practices for all students and help them achieve high standards of learning.

2. *Ensure that all principals make the Principles of Learning a priority and expect to see the reforms implemented at the classroom level. Make certain that principals understand the Principles of Learning, the ways in which they are incorporated into instructional practice, and the importance of fostering continuous learning for their campus staff.*

The evaluation of the POL initiative suggests that the implementation of the Principles of Learning might be more similar across the district if professional development opportunities for principals were strengthened for all principals. Principals

might also benefit from more professional development that occurs in smaller groups, whether by area, campus level, or learning level (e.g., novice principals learning together, or experienced principals learning together). Professional development on the Principles should also more directly address how principals can take what they have learned back to their campuses so that they may lead others in their learning. A majority of principals reported that area and vertical team meetings were most effective for helping them learn about the Principles; district leaders of this initiative may want to consider how this avenue for professional development may be further utilized.

3. *Ensure that all teachers incorporate the Principles of Learning in instructional practice and that they understand the Principles and how they fit with their area(s) of teaching.*

The findings of this evaluation suggest that understanding about the initiative seems most focused at the top levels of administration (i.e., program leaders and some principals who have more access to enhanced learning opportunities). If district administrators expect the Principles of Learning to be implemented at a deeper level in classrooms, it is important that professional development opportunities in the form of coaching and other activities such as study groups or LearningWalks with colleagues continue and be made available for all teaching staff. Because teachers reportedly spent relatively small amounts of time on professional development devoted to the Principles of Learning, program leaders for the initiative should find ways to create time for professional growth and the development of communities of learners among teachers. Teachers reported that grade level team meetings (or departments, at the secondary level) were most effective at helping them learn about the Principles of Learning. Grade level/departmental team meetings, then, may provide one way to begin strengthening the professional development opportunities offered to teachers.

4. *Explore the possibility of having the district leaders assume more management of POL-related changes in the district.*

Some program leaders have referred to the financial cost of the partnership with the Institute for Learning as being excessively high. The real costs to the district, however, also involve the time needed for professional development. District leaders would do well to consider that reforms to instructional practice and leadership in New York City's Community District #2 (a former partner of the IFL) have taken years to implement, and that changes continued to occur 10 years after those reforms began (Elmore & Burney, 1998). A strong implementation of the kinds of reforms advocated by the Institute for Learning and under the Principles of Learning will take several more years. Elmore and Burney (1998) explain:

> An important element of continuous improvement is that each set of new solutions or initiatives, no matter how well articulated with core values, creates new problems for the organization, and new problems necessitate new solutions. Most school systems are unaccustomed to the idea of continuous problem-solving, since most educational "reforms" are sold as more or less "final" solutions to all the major problems plaguing public schools.

In short, if district leaders want to continue reforms under the Principles of Learning, plans for committing the necessary time and resources must be in place, whether the reforms are to be carried out with the assistance of the Institute for Learning or solely in-house.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

During 2000-2001, professional development for area superintendents, principals, instructional specialists, and teachers about the Principles of Learning focused on Clear Expectations. Staff at some campuses began learning about the Principle of Accountable Talk as well during that first year. In 2001-2002, AISD educators focused on implementing the Principle of Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum, and campuses continued to implement Clear Expectations as well as Accountable Talk. The Institute for Learning has established meanings for these terms by first describing *features* of each Principle, which help define them. Second, *indicators* for most of the features under the Principles are given, and these describe observable evidence associated with that Principle. Summaries of Clear Expectations, Accountable Talk, and Academic Rigor are given below, as well as a description of LearningWalks.

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Under the principle of Clear Expectations, students' learning goals (i.e., the standards) are clearly defined—to school administration, parents, the community, and especially, the students themselves (Resnick, 1999). Four "features" of Clear Expectations describe the principle:

- Standards that include models of student work are available to and discussed with students.
- Students judge their work with respect to the standards.
- Intermediate expectations leading to the formally measured standards are specified.
- Families and community are informed about the accomplishment standards that children are expected to achieve.

Professional development about Clear Expectations has included information about the "indicators," that is, the observable practices for ensuring that student expectations are clear to the primary stakeholders (e.g., students, family, and community). Each feature of Clear Expectations has a number of indicators associated with it, and these have been the focus of campus-level work on implementation of the Principles. Of the 16 indicators that are part of Clear Expectations, those most relevant to the work in AISD on this initiative include:

- Standards and rubrics are posted in the classroom and are discussed with students.

- Students in the class can describe the substance of what they are trying to learn.
- Students are involved in explicating the criteria for work that meets the accomplishment standard (e.g., charts and rubrics are stated in student terms).
- Students know clearly when they have and have not met the intermediate expectations and standards.
- For every grade level, a sequence of expected concepts and skills are specified that lead explicitly to the formally measured standards.
- Parents know the standards and intermediate expectations toward which their children are working.

ACCOUNTABLE TALK

The Principle of Accountable Talk is related to expectations for high quality work, but centers more directly on thinking and reasoning, and acknowledges the importance of talking with others about ideas and class work for advancing students' learning. The IFL lists three components of Accountable Talk:

- Engagement with learning through talk
- Accountability to the learning community
- Accountability to knowledge
- Accountability to rigorous thinking

As Resnick (1999) describes it, Accountable Talk "puts forth and demands knowledge that is accurate and relevant to the issue under discussion." To illustrate, students engaged in Accountable Talk use evidence in ways that are appropriate to the subject under study (e.g., proofs in math, textual details in literature, data in science). Students use talk with teachers and fellow students to build on their understanding. For example, during class discussions students respond to each other and further develop what others have said. Students formulate conjectures and hypotheses ("what if" scenarios), and provide evidence for claims and arguments. In essence, for all class work, norms of good reasoning are followed.

ACADEMIC RIGOR

Academic Rigor encompasses the idea that knowledge and thinking are intimately joined. A curriculum organized around major concepts that students are expected to know deeply is a necessary component of instruction, along with teaching that engages

students in active reasoning about these concepts. In every subject, at every grade level, instruction and learning includes the following:

- Commitment to a knowledge core
- High thinking demand
- Active use of knowledge

Class assignments, then, are challenging and give students opportunities to raise questions, solve problems, and construct explanations within a curriculum that progressively deepens understanding of core concepts. Also, students' prior knowledge and out-of-school knowledge are used regularly in the teaching and learning process.

LEARNINGWALKS AND LEARNINGWALK LETTERS

LearningWalks[10] are visits to a campus and its classrooms in which participants examine student work and classrooms, and talk with students and teachers. Between classroom visits, participants often gather to discuss what they learned in the classroom and offer any questions they have about their observations.

LearningWalk groups in AISD included a variety of district staff and community members. At some schools that received federal Title I funds, principals organized LearningWalks for parents with the help of the campus parent/community liaison. Parent LearningWalks were designed to give parents information about the TEKS and to help parents understand how these learning standards were being conveyed through the implementation of the Principles of Learning.

After LearningWalks that were led by the area superintendent and principal, the principal often wrote a letter addressed to the campus staff. The purpose of a LearningWalk letter was to stimulate discussions about how to improve teaching and learning among staff at a campus, in addition to promoting reflection about progress in implementing the Principles of Learning.

[10] See http://www.instituteforlearning.org.

APPENDIX B: EXCERPT FROM THE 2001-2002AISD PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBSERVATION PROTOCOL: DESCRIPTIONS OF RATINGS

OVERALL RATINGS OF THE SESSION

While the impact of a single professional development session may well be limited in scope, it is important to judge whether the session is likely to help move participants in the desired direction. For ratings below, consider all available information (i.e., your previous ratings of design, implementation, content, and culture; related interviews; and your knowledge of the overall professional development program) as you assess the likely impact of this session. Feel free to elaborate on ratings with comments in the space provided.

CAPSULE DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALITY OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION

In this final rating of the session, consider all available information about the session, its context and purpose, and your own judgment of the relative importance of the ratings you have made. Select the capsule description that best characterizes the session you observed. Keep in mind that this rating is not intended to be an average of all the previous ratings, but should encapsulate your overall assessment of the quality and likely impact of the session.

- O **Level 1: Ineffective Professional Development**

There is little or no evidence of participant thinking or engagement with important ideas of classroom instruction. Session is *highly unlikely* to enhance the capacity of participants to provide high quality classroom instruction or to be effective leaders of instructional leaders in the district. Professional development appears to be either (select one below):

- O **Passive "Learning"**

  Session is pedantic and uninspiring. Participants are passive recipients of information; material is presented in a way that is inaccessible to or inappropriate for many of the participants.

- O **Activity for Activity's Sake**

  Participants are involved in hands-on activities or other individual or group work, but it appears to be activity for activity's sake. Session lacks a clear sense of purpose and/or a clear link to the conceptual development of participants.

O **Level 2: Elements of Effective Professional Development**

Session contains some elements of effective practice in professional development, but there are *serious problems* in the design, content, and/or implementation given the purposes of the session. For example, the content is presented in a way that would reinforce misconceptions or the pace is clearly too rapid for meaningful participant engagement. Overall, the session is *very limited* in its likelihood to enhance the capacity of most participants to provide high quality classroom instruction or to be effective instructional leaders in the district.

O **Level 3: Beginning Stages of Effective Professional Development (Select one.)**

O Low 3 O Solid 3 O High 3

Professional development is purposeful and at times effective, but there are *weaknesses*, ranging from substantial to fairly minor, in the design, content, or implementation of the session. For example, participants' expertise is not well-utilized; or participants are not given sufficient opportunity to reflect on what they are learning. Overall, the session is *somewhat limited* in its likelihood to enhance the capacity of participants to provide high quality classroom instruction or to be effective instructional leaders in the district.

O **Level 4: Accomplished, Effective Professional Development**

Facilitation is skillful and participants are engaged in purposeful work (e.g., investigations, discussions, presentations, reading) designed to deepen their understanding of important concepts; enhance their pedagogical skills and knowledge; increase their ability to use the designated instructional materials; or to enhance their leadership skills. The facilitator(s) implement the professional development session well and participants' contributions are valued, but adaptation of content or format in response to participants' needs and interests may be somewhat limited. The session is *quite likely* to enhance the capacity of most participants to provide high quality classroom instruction or to be effective instructional leaders in the district.

O **Level 5: Exemplary Professional Development**

Facilitation is skillful, and participants are highly engaged in purposeful work (e.g., investigations, discussions, presentations, reading) designed to deepen their understanding of important mathematics/science concepts; enhance their pedagogical skills and knowledge; increase their ability to use the designated instructional materials; or to enhance their leadership skills. The session is artfully implemented, with flexibility and responsiveness to participant needs/interests. The session is *highly likely* to enhance the capacity of participants to provide high quality classroom instruction or to be effective instructional leaders in the district.

APPENDIX C:
EXCERPT FROM THE 2001-2002AISD PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL: DEFINITIONS OF THE RUBRIC SCALE

(To be used for rating each Principle separately.)

Level 0, Absence of POL

The lesson appears to lack meaningful implementation of the Principles of Learning (POL). Students do not actively participate in lesson nor demonstrate that they are thinking about the lesson. The lesson *does not appear* to help students deepen their conceptual understanding of TEKS and/or rigorous content. The lesson can be characterized by one of two different types:

A. **Passive Learning:** Students are passive recipients of knowledge and not actively involved in learning, despite references to POL (e.g., mentioning principles such as Clear Expectations, Accountable Talk). The teacher or textbook is the source of information and understanding, not students. Any POL indicators (e.g., criteria charts, rubrics) are inauthentic and void of the spirit of the Principles (e.g., constructed completely by teacher with no student input and not visible or accessible to students and the community).

B. **Activity for Activity's Sake:** Students engage in group or individual work, but the activity is void of content and meaning and appears to be activity for activity's sake. Lesson lacks a clear sense of purpose and/or clear link to conceptual development.

Level 1, Elements of POL

Elements of POL are apparent in instruction, but there are *severe limitations*. For example, the Principles addressed are disconnected from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and/or rigorous content; a Principle is presented as a unit separate from other content areas; a Principle is applied only to a topic not linked to rigorous content, such as behavioral management; students appear not to have an understanding of POL (e.g., criteria charts); talk is about how to do task (i.e., instructions), rather than about reasoning, evaluating, and revising student work; or outside factors, such as classroom management, interfere with implementation of POL. The use of POL does *not effectively lead* to students' deepening their conceptual understanding of TEKS and/or rigorous content.

Level 2, Beginning Stages of POL Implementation

Teacher uses the Principle throughout the lesson and integrates it into a content area. Students are actively engaged in the lesson, but the manifestations of the Principle are *weak*. Instruction does not reflect the teacher's deep understanding of POL nor strong facilitation skills. For example, in working with students to develop a criteria chart or rubric, the teacher gives answers, rather than facilitates the development of students' conceptual understanding; talk about content during discussions primarily occurs between the teacher and student, not between students; the lesson may not adequately push forward the understanding of a number of students in the classroom; indicators related to Clear Expectations or Academic Rigor are visible in classroom or hallway displays, but teacher language predominates; or students use the same strategies for solving problems or justifying arguments. The use of POL provides *some* exploration of content area that appears to lead to students' deepening their conceptual understanding of TEKS and/or rigorous content.

Level 3, Accomplished POL Implementation

Teacher uses the Principle throughout the lesson and integrates it into content area. The Principle is evident in the classroom and appears to promote meaningful learning of the content, which is TEKS-based. *Many* students actively engage in the lesson, including teacher presentations, group discussions, reading, etc., but a small number of students appear less engaged. Small limitations may include: teachers' questioning strategies encourage active participation and collaboration among students, but students communicate only with the teacher; criteria charts or rubrics do not make standards for student work clear to students at all levels of performance. The use of POL provides exploration of content area that appears to enhance *many* students' conceptual understanding of TEKS and/or rigorous content.

Level 4, Exemplary POL Implementation

Students take ownership of their learning, and the teacher *skillfully* uses the Principle in the content area of the lesson. For example, high quality talk permeates discussions about lesson content; students can articulate expectations for good work in the class; and assignments are rigorous and TEKS-based. *Nearly all* students actively engage in the lesson, including teacher presentations, group discussions, reading, etc. Communication about content occurs among students as well as between students and the teacher. The teacher and students guide students to clarify and justify their thinking, contributing to the rigor of the task. Students and teacher are flexible in the strategies they use for

solving problems and justifying their arguments. Classroom and hallway displays communicate clearly to students, families, and the community what standards their students are working toward. The use of POL provides exploration of content area that appears to lead to *nearly all* students' deepening their conceptual understanding of TEKS and/or rigorous content.

APPENDIX D:
PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION: NUMBER OF CLASSROOMS RATED AT EACH LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION, BY TARGET PRINCIPLE

Number of Classrooms Rated at Each Level of Implementation
by Targeted Principle of Learning

Principle of Learning	Classroom Rating*				
	0 *Absent*	1 *Elements*	2 *Beginning*	3 *Accomplished*	4 *Exemplary*
Clear Expectations	8	15	9	1	1
Accountable Talk	5	11	10	8	0
Academic Rigor	4	9	9	11	1

*See Appendix C for a description of the rating scale used in the classroom observations.

Source: Spring 2002 Classroom Observations

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